

*United States Senate*  
*Committee on Finance*



*Sen. Chuck Grassley · Iowa*  
*Ranking Member*

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Opening Statement of Senator Chuck Grassley  
Senate Committee on Finance  
Nomination Hearing on Michael J. Astrue  
Commissioner of the Social Security Administration  
January 24, 2007

I would like to congratulate you on your nomination and welcome you to the Finance Committee. I know from our conversation earlier this week that you are eager to get started with your new assignment. The job of Social Security Commissioner is an extremely important one. The Commissioner is responsible for the management and oversight of the Social Security retirement, survivors, and disability programs. These programs are vital to the well being of millions of Americans.

As Commissioner, you will face many challenges. In the near-term, the agency will face increased workloads with limited resources. Although, I'm hopeful Congress will be able to provide the funds necessary to avoid an agency-wide furlough. In the longer-term, the agency will face the retirement of the baby boomers. This will adversely affect the agency's workforce, its workload, and ultimately its financial solvency.

The agency needs strong leadership to meet these challenges. It needs someone who is committed to the day-to-day operations of the agency and the long-term viability of the program. I believe you have that commitment. You have held senior positions at the Department of Health and Human Services, the White House, and the Social Security Administration. You have also held positions of leadership in the private sector, including most recently interim CEO of Epix Pharmaceuticals. Your previous experience demonstrates a commitment to public service as well as a vision for leadership. Your experience and vision will serve you well as you undertake your new assignment. Once again, congratulations on your nomination. I look forward to working with you.